

University of Virginia, Pavilion VII
West Lawn
University of Virginia
Charlottesville
Virginia

HABS No. VA-193-F

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA, PAVILION VII

HABS No. VA-193-F

Location: West Lawn, University of Virginia,
Charlottesville, Virginia.

Present Owner: University of Virginia.

Significance: Pavilion VII, one of ten Pavillions on "The Lawn" at the University of Virginia, was designed by Thomas Jefferson. This building is of further importance since it contains the cornerstone of the University, which was laid on October 6, 1917. In the subsequent years there have been two major additions to Pavilion VII. Construction of the first addition commenced in 1857, nearly doubling the size of the original structure. In 1913 the second addition was begun, transforming the then rectangular plan into the current "T" shaped plan.

HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION

On October 6, 1817, the cornerstone of Pavilion VII and the University of Virginia was laid. Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Monroe, and much of the population of Charlottesville attended the ceremony. The cornerstone was originally part of what was to be Central college, but was renamed the University of Virginia by the state legislature on January 25, 1819. The land on which Pavilion VII and the rest of "The Lawn" is situated was bought from John M. Perry. The land was bought in two parcels of approximately 200 total acres, and transfer of the title to Alexander Garrett, a trustee of Central college, was made on June 23, 1817.¹ The total cost of these parcels was \$1,518.75.²

The original brickwork was done by Matthew Brown, David Knight, and Hugh Chisholm. The woodwork was done by John M. Perry, the original owner of the property, and the tin was supplied by Mr. A. H. Brooks.³ It is also known that W. J. Coffee did the ox skull frieze in the Committee Room.⁴ The total cost for the original Pavilion was \$9,399.73. The original structure had one room on the first floor plus a stair-hall, two rooms on the second floor, and a basement. It was intended that the first floor room be used as a classroom and that the upstairs rooms be used as a Professor's residence. Pavilion VII, however, was used as the Library for the University until at least 1826 and possibly as late as 1840.

Pavilion VII has had only three professors use it as a home. These men are, in order of their residence: Dr. John Staige Davis, Sr., Leopold J. Boeck, and Noah K. Davis. In addition to these three men, Dr. Dunglison occupied Pavilion VII temporarily. The retirement of Dr. Davis in 1907 left the Pavilion vacant, whereupon the Colonnade Club, the present inhabitant, took residence. In 1857 an addition was made to Pavilion VII which approximately doubled the size of the building. This added a

stair-hall and two rooms to each floor and enlarged the basement. In 1913 a second addition was made to provide rooms for Colonnade-Club guests and other facilities for general Club use. This second addition was designed by Ferguson, Carlow, and Taylor of Norfolk, Virginia and cost approximately 12,000 dollars.

LIST OF WORKS CONSULTED

Bruce, Philip Alexander. History of the University of Virginia, 1819-1919 (vol. 1). New York: The Macmillan Company, 1920.

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Nichols, Frederick Doveton. Thomas Jefferson's Architectural Drawings. Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1961.

O'Neal, William B. Jefferson's Buildings at the University of Virginia. Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1960.

O'Neal, William B. Pictorial History of the University of Virginia. Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1968.

Patton, John S. Jefferson, Cabell, and the University of Virginia. New York: The Neale Publishing Company, 1906.

GENERAL ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Pavilion VII is located on "The Lawn" at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. This building was the first one begun at the University and was designed by Thomas Jefferson. It is one of the earliest Roman Revival buildings in America, a style that was introduced in America by Jefferson. Many parts of this Pavilion and the others are derived from the drawings in Palladio's pattern books.

The building is "T" shaped in plan and measures approximately 120 feet both from front to back and side to side. The main facade has five bays which are made through the use of an arcade on the ground level and colonnade on the second floor. The roof over the original structure and the first addition is a gable roof, with a handsome pediment containing a semi-circular window. An equally handsome three-part entablature accompanies the slate roof. The first addition is architecturally harmonious with the original structure in all facets. The second addition, however, lacks much of the fine detailing of the earlier parts,

especially in the guest bedrooms, but the reading room is detailed in the Colonial Revival style.

In the time since the measurements were taken, part of the basement has been remodeled to better serve the needs of those in the Colonnade Club. Pavilion VII's overall condition is good due to fairly regular maintenance, although some painting and minor repairs are needed.

EXTERIOR DESCRIPTION

FOUNDATIONS: The foundations throughout the Pavilion are of brick. The water table around the building is high and made of plain brick. The bond type varies in each section of the building.

EXTERIOR WALL SHEATHING: All exterior walls are made of red brick. The bond type also varies according to the addition: the original structure is of Flemish bond, the first addition is of alternating five rows of stretcher bond and one row of Flemish bond, and the final addition is of three-course American bond.

STRUCTURAL SYSTEM: The walls throughout are solid brick. The roof and ceiling framing is of rough hewn timber.

PORCHES: The second addition has a large terrace on the west (back) side which runs the length of the addition. Doric columns support a pergola which runs the length of the terrace. Entry to this terrace is either from the large reading room at the rear of the Pavilion or from the two adjoining halls or from the garden. The floor surface of the terrace is scored concrete. The terrace does not have railing of any kind. A portico is also located on the east (front) end of the building on the second floor. The roof overhead is supported by Roman Tuscan columns which are made of brick and covered with plaster. The floor surface of the porch is sheet metal, and the porch is contained by Chippendale railing along the front. The arcade supporting this porch is composed of five half-round arches.

CHIMNEYS: There are three chimneys on the Pavilion, all of which are located on the roof ridge line. The easternmost chimney at one time supported three fireplaces, and possibly another in the basement. Two of these, the one on the first floor and the one upstairs are still functioning. The center chimney supports six fireplaces, two on each level. Both of the fireplaces in the basement have been filled in, and one fireplace on the first floor has been walled up. The third chimney serves a single fireplace in the reading room, which is still in use.

DOORWAYS AND DOORS: The main door located on the eastern elevation is a rectangular six-panel door. Above the door is a transom window with

architrave trim. The front door of Jefferson's original design was located in the center of the facade, but was later moved to its current location on the far right side of the facade. Shutters have been nailed over the original opening on the outside, and on the inside the opening has been walled over. At the west end (back) of the Pavilion, the doors which open up onto the terrace are double doors with ten lights in each half of the door. These doors also open into each of the additions on the basement level. The door into the first addition is a simple board-and-batten type, while the door into the second addition contains one large panel with three lights of glass above.

WINDOWS AND SHUTTERS: The windows in the front (east) room are all triple hung, while all the other windows throughout the pavilion are double hung. The windows in the first addition are 6/6 type, with sideboards that angle toward the center. The windows in the second addition are also uniform. They are much the same as those in the first addition except that they do not have the angled sideboards. All shutters are the fixed louvered type, with metal latches which are used to hold the shutters open. All of the windows in the original structure and the first addition have segmental arched openings.

ROOF: The roof over the original and first addition is a gable type roof with a slope of approximately thirty degrees and is covered with slate. The gable roof has an elaborate box cornice with three part entablature, with the frieze composed of metopies and triglyphs. The underside of the cornice is decorated with alternation panels of circular elements and diamond-shaped elements. The roof over the second addition is hipped at a very slight angle, and covered with tar and gravel.

INTERIOR DESCRIPTION

FLOOR PLANS: The basement plan is generally "L" shaped, covering all but the northern two-thirds of the second addition. The basement is finished, with exception to the southeast corner room of the original part. The first floor plan is "T" shaped, encompassing the full floor area of the plan. The second floor is rectangular in plan, covering the original section and first addition only.

STAIRWAYS: There are three stairways within the Pavilion. One connects the basement to the first floor, and is located in the second addition. This stair has an interesting curved handrail at its bottom. Another stair also connects the basement to the first floor, and is located in the first addition. Directly above this stair is the third and last stair, which connects the first and second floors. One point to make note of is that the stair in Jefferson's original existed in what is now the entry hall, but was later moved to its present location in the first addition. All stairs are of the open-string type with plain wood balusters, and all have simple brackets. The rise and run are approximately 7" and 10", respectively, on all the stairways.

FLOORING: The flooring is wood throughout the first and second floors. The boards are generally of random width boards and are 5" wide on average. The basement is concrete throughout, save the pool room, which has a narrow tongue-and-groove wood floor of regular character.

WALL AND CEILING FINISH: All walls and ceilings are made of plaster. There are wooden baseboards and cornices on most walls, with chairrails in some of the rooms. The reading room has panelled wainscoting.

DOORWAYS AND DOORS: The interior doors are generally six panel wood doors with architrave trim. There are two types of doors in the reading room. The two doors on the east wall are double doors with ten lights of glass on each side. Each door also has a glass on each side. Each door also has a glassed semi-circular window above. Architrave trim borders the door and a key-stone sits atop the arch. The other doors on the north and south side of this room are six panel doors which are framed by paneled pilasters and an entablature. The majority of the remaining doors throughout the Pavilion are also the six-panel type.

INTERIOR TRIM: The frieze in the Committee room on the second floor is worthy of special note. It is approximately 18" tall and has alternating ox skulls and cherubs. The reading room also has a frieze of special note. It consists of metopes and triglyphs. The fireplace in this room is finely detailed with two fluted pilasters on each side and a panelled frieze.

NOTES

¹Philip Alexander Bruce, History of the University of Virginia (vol. 1) (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1906). p. 37.

²John S. Patton, Jefferson, Cabell, and the University of Virginia (New York: The Neal Publishing Company, 1906), p. 37.

³Bruce, op. cit., p. 252.

⁴Ibid., p. 258.

PROJECT INFORMATION

This documentation was undertaken by the School of Architecture at the University of Virginia, under the direction of K. Edward Lay, Professor of Architecture, during the Spring Semester, 1982. The project was conducted by J. Scott Taylor and Edward G. Hicks III, undergraduate students in architecture. The material was donated to the Historic American Buildings Survey. It was not supervised by HABS, nor was the material edited by members of the HABS staff.